

Joint Committee on Environment Members,

House Bill 5293 (HB5293) is not supported by legitimate animal welfare advocates. The misleading bill is actually an unjust and broad ban hiding under false propaganda that advances the animal rights agenda of removing all animals from our lives. This is not just a ban on animals in circuses, as the deceptive statement of purpose falsely reports. It is instead a blanket ban on animals in any type of educational program. Over 90% of such beneficial programs will not qualify for the very limited exemption list. Legislators stopped this bill in 2020 and you should do the same in 2022.

As a Connecticut resident, I do not appreciate that one of my legislators is misinforming people about this bill. There is not a blanket exemption for environmental education programs, as reported by at least one legislator. These programs are only allowed if the program is: administered by a facility accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, engaged in licensed falconry, or permitted by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. While I would hope this misinformation by a legislator is unintentional, it seems to be intentionally misleading to deter opposition. Frankly, this misdirection by a bill sponsor should be enough to get this bill thrown out!

This is not a bill that would just, "prohibit the use of wild and exotic animals in traveling circuses." The overreach and injustice travel well beyond this misleading "purpose." You must remember that legislators do not enforce the laws. Enforcement officers must enforce the law, not what a legislator claims a bill will do. This bill is poorly written and rife with unintended consequences.

Among other overreaching measures, this bill bans animal outreach programs before not only school students, but also Scout troops, fair exhibitions, and more, classifying such beneficial programs as inherently cruel. Those who would travel with their animals to teach schoolchildren about biology, conservation, and animal physiology will be made into criminals!

It seems HB5293 lacks research. For example, the bill would ban educational programs involving any non-domesticated animal. This bill is not about protecting animals. It is about removing animals from our lives and experiences. The fact is that this legislation is unnecessary. Punish the "bad actors" and criminals with current animal cruelty and welfare laws. No new law is needed to protect animals as Connecticut can already prosecute animal abusers.

HB5293 is yet another superfluous law with a very misleading stated purpose. Are you aware this bill makes someone a criminal for presenting an animal education program with a tortoise, parrot, frog, gecko, or almost any animal to a school class? Rather than helping animals, this bill actually harms the future of animal welfare and appreciation by banning the experiences that draw most people into animal-related fields such as those in biology, veterinary, and conservation.

Superfluous and redundant laws are becoming commonplace. Tax dollars and legislative resources are continually being wasted to propose duplicative laws. Even worse, collective punishment is becoming an accepted practice in our government. Instead of focusing on criminals, many new laws choose to punish good citizens.

This bill is far-reaching and rife with unintended consequences, including making criminals out of those dedicated individuals who responsibly conduct educational programs with animals.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

Please realize that HB5293 is illogical and unjust. Have a good day.

Dominique Casillas

